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ABSTRACT

The present definition of social services for young people should be extended beyond the provision of counseling and therapy to include the provision of help for those who do not have psychological problems. For example, the role of probation officers should include helping probationers find a job and keep it, return to school, or obtain other needed services. It is a fact, however, that the dominant form of social services to youth is counseling. Such an emphasis seems misplaced when the single greatest need of millions of young people is in the area of employment. In this respect, the work experiences created for teenagers should be evaluated to see if they provide worthwhile experiences and the educational needs of these young people should be reviewed with renewed care. Many youth will need job readiness preparation in addition to skills and extensive support services while on a job, whether the job is subsidized or not. Additional problems demanding discussion are the role of social services in relation to the schools; the system of income maintenance and welfare assistance; juvenile justice policy; services to troubled youth at the community level; and federal foster care policy. (Author/SS)

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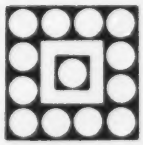

the center for early adolescence

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I want to congratulate the National Conference on Social Welfare for the mini-conference approach it has chosen to help examine the issues involved in seeking improved national social service policies. Breaking things down by the stages of life has ample precedent, of course, but it is nonetheless a valuable device for thinking about service needs and challenges.

My task is in the area of youth. If you are going to spend the next three or four days looking for a national youth policy, I want to begin by giving you a tip. We already have one. No one enacted or proclaimed it, but it exists and is all too real.

What do I mean? Youth, or adolescence, is a stage of life that, as a mass phenomenon, is peculiar to advanced industrialized societies. In agrarian societies the labor of young people is required at an early age to help fuel the economy. There is no time for prolonged adolescence. The transition to adulthood is abrupt and no doubt sometimes painful, but it is not dragged out.

As technology becomes more and more sophisticated, however, serious discontinuities develop. The economy has insufficient need of young workers and does not welcome their full participation until they reach their third decade of life. In the United States this has become especially visible since World War II. More and more, we have adopted a national stance which assumes that everyone will finish high school and most will acquire some form of post-secondary education, with the remainder being absorbed by the labor market in jobs that do not require post-secondary training.

The only problem with this vision is that there are a huge number of young people for whom it does not work. Some of those are mainstream youth who chafe at being forced to remain in an educational lock-step continuously from the age of 5 to the age of 21 or higher, and would prefer to spend portions of their late teen-age years sampling the labor market, learning experientially in a variety of other ways, or possibly engaging in some form of community service. Many of them would be glad to acquire more education later when they feel they need it and know what it is they need.

Others, perhaps a larger number and certainly an even more acutely pressing problem, see no hope and no prospect of ever competing successfully in the labor market and drop out of school at least in part due to that total sense of hopelessness. If the first group develops in a way that is less than desirable for them as individuals, the second runs the risk of never developing to a degree that even approaches any reasonable level of aspiration or expectation.

Thus, we surely do have a national policy as much as we would have if we had conceptualized, enacted and implemented one. We want young people to sit on the bench until we are ready for them to enter the game. As Edgar

Friedenberg pointed out, we treat young people like a colonial possession until we are ready to let them join the mother country. And, among other things, some of them develop some rather annoying and even quite destructive forms of rebellion while they are awaiting their emancipation.

Moreover, "youth" as a time of life is getting longer and longer in America. Young people mature physically at earlier ages than ever, while major sectors of the economy postpone their admittance to full participation to later and later ages.

Very roughly speaking, there are, as I have implied, two categories of "youth" issues in America -- mainstream and non-mainstream, or, in a somewhat different formulation, quality and equity.

In numerical terms, most young people go through adolescence without getting tied up into impossible knots. They graduate from high school and either go on to college or other post-secondary education or enter the job market without undue difficulty. This is not to say that everything is satisfactory for this group. There are serious issues about the quality of the education and services they receive on their way to adulthood, and about the general social attitude which tends to treat young people essentially as large children who should be seen and not heard until called upon.

The non-mainstreaming group faces problems of both quality and equity. This group, obviously, is disproportionately Black, Hispanic and poor. The black college graduate faces the same chance of being unemployed as the white high school graduate. The black high school graduate faces the same chance of being unemployed as the white grade school dropout. Black teenagers face unemployment rates of 35 to 40 percent; white teenagers are unemployed at a rate of 12-15 percent.

The schools attended by the non-mainstream group are generally underfinanced and of poorer quality. This group faces a far greater chance of involvement in the criminal justice system. They have a history of poor health care. For example, one out of every three children in America under the age of 17 has never seen a dentist. One could go on almost ad infinitum in reciting the disparities.

These two rough categories are not neatly separated from one another. Apart from those who are kept from the mainstream by reason of racial discrimination and class distinctions, there are thousands upon thousands who are pushed out of the mainstream or fall out by reason of problems that could have been prevented or dealt with on a more individual basis. There are young women who become pregnant and have babies at an inappropriately early age, young people who destroy and stunt their lives with drugs and alcohol, handicapped and learning disabled young people who do not receive the special help they need, and rebellious or behaviorally disruptive young people who are ultimately pushed into the criminal justice system by the failure of the schools and others to respond to their needs.

This, of course, is a speech about services, not about youth generally. Our task, therefore, is to define the role of services in helping young

people move through their time of transition to adulthood. My role as keynoter, specifically, is to suggest some issues and areas for you to consider as you work at the subject in the coming days. It will not surprise you to hear that most of my thoughts will relate to those who are out of the mainstream or at risk of being so.

Let me begin with a couple of issues which touch all the rest -- the question of what constitutes a social service, and the related issue of the professional attitude or perspective which attends the delivery of social service. It is my view that, historically, social services have generally been taken to mean activities involving counseling or therapy and, concomitantly, the assumption has been that recipients of social service suffer from some pathology that needs to be treated. I find both propositions deficient, and I take it most of us do.

Even if we confine our clarification of content and roles to tasks that might be performed by social workers, I would suggest that a valid definition of social service goes far beyond counseling and therapy and extends to helping people who have no individual pathology whatsoever.

This may seem obvious. For example, Title XX explicitly includes within its orbit a vast array of activities that fit my broader definition. Nevertheless, the proposition is not as obvious as it should be.

Probation services around the country, as one instance, are still largely viewed as counseling services. In too many places it is difficult to get probation officers to see as a valid part of their role the necessity of helping probationers find a job and keep it, find and hold appropriate training slots, get back into school and stay there, and obtain access to other needed services. Nor does it help that legislatures and other policy makers have not seen fit to give probation departments the resources to purchase needed services for their clients.

When I headed the New York State Division for Youth, I saw the results of this narrowness of perspective first hand. We had a category of community service personnel called after-care workers -- essentially juvenile parole officers, to use traditional terminology. When I came into office in 1975, it was my impression that too many of these workers, although not all by any means, saw their job in counseling terms. The youth was to report in periodically, perhaps weekly, and if there was problem of attitude or adjustment, he or she and the worker would try to talk it out. All too seldom did the worker try actively to help the youth get a job or a CETA slot, let alone make sure the youth showed up every day or mediate when the employer was ready to give up because of tardiness or insubordination. All too seldom did the worker go to the local school and make sure it not only received the youngster back, but did not misclassify him or her into the track for the educable mentally retarded, or suspend the youth the first time he or she talked back to a teacher.

When I began to press actively for a broader role for the after-care worker as broker and advocate for other services, I found some workers who thought

these activities were beneath them. They had been to social work school and had learned that counseling and therapy were what social workers do. These other things might be good for someone to do but not for them. One day I happened to meet with the social work deans of New York State, and I told them of my experience. They acknowledged that it was no accident, and said that they had tried to change their curricula but were not satisfied that enough had been accomplished. Tenured faculty of long standing constituted one barrier, but so also did the prevailing ethos of many students who came to the social work school with the preconceived notion of becoming therapists -- one might even say a preconceived notion of a short cut to de facto psychiatry.

Indeed, the counseling bias which characterized some of our after-care workers was present in many of the residential programs as well. No one had ever suggested to the Legislature that it appropriate money and create career lines for employment specialists in the agency, or for teachers specializing in learning disabilities. The great staffing reform just five years earlier was to get significant numbers of MSW's hired so that counseling and therapy in the institutions would be professionalized. This was certainly necessary and appropriate, but it was far from sufficient.

Other than the useful consequences of Title I of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, little effort had been made to improve the schooling offered in the institutions. The vocational shops looked and felt as they had for decades. Summer CETA jobs had appeared on the scene for youth in community-based programs and in after-care, and two other small year-round CETA-funded training and work experience programs had been started.

But the basic fact remained that the dominant approach to youth placed with the agency was one of counseling, and the rhetoric was unambiguously that of "treatment." Federal money had allowed some modest improvement in education and vocational efforts, but no one had ever said to the Governor or the Legislature that "treatment" as the premise of service was far too narrow, and the funding base of the agency correspondingly deficient.

It is now a cliche, after the 1960's, to say that you cannot social work people out of poverty. But I am sorry to say there are too many in the profession who are still trying. Until and unless social services are widely seen as including the "hard" as well as the "soft," and as encompassing advocacy and brokerage as well as counseling functions, I would suggest that social workers will continue to decline in prestige and social services will be the last budget category to be increased and the first to be cut.

Now -- having warmed you up in more ways than one -- let us turn to some particular areas and issues.

The greatest single crisis for literally millions of youth is in the area of employment. Half the unemployed in America are under 25 years of age.

The problem has been getting steadily worse for a quarter of a century. Black teenage unemployment, for example, has grown from 25 to 40 percent over that period of time.

The issues for national policy are manifold. There are not enough jobs for young people, and there are thousands upon thousands of young people who do not have the requisite skills to function in the adult labor market. Some among these have serious problems of attitude and behavior that will interfere with job performances as well.

Any program that is developed will have to address the issues of both demand and supply. It cannot place youngsters in subsidized work experiences, however meaningful the work, if it does not simultaneously address their skill needs and, where relevant, their supportive service needs. Similarly, it cannot train people for jobs that do not exist.

The Carter Administration has made an interesting and useful beginning in dealing with these problems. In 1977 Congress enacted the Youth Employment Demonstration Programs Act which has provided over a billion dollars a year in new funds for a variety of youth job initiatives. At the present time a task force chaired by Vice President Mondale is working with a wide range of federal agencies and an even wider range of other agencies and organizations to review the programs and come up with findings on what is working and what is not, and where to go next. The YEDPA Act expires next year, so the matter will come before Congress again for further action at that time.

I hope the review process will produce some useful findings on a number of points.

First, we need to examine the work experiences we are creating for teenagers to see whether they are all they might be.

Unfortunately, the most visible program of job creation for young people is the summer job program which has been widely and to a considerable extent justly criticized as a no-show, no-work, or, at best, make-work effort.

The new year-round programs are far more interesting, but I think there are still many more avenues to explore. Why, for example, can we not invest in training and then using the idle hands of the inner city in rebuilding and renovating the houses and the facilities which are dilapidated and deteriorated? This is exactly what the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation has done with literally hundreds of housing units in that community. Why do we not make it a national program?

I believe there are excellent possibilities with neighborhood small businessmen, too. When we talk private enterprise, the conversation too often turns immediately to big business. General Motors and General Foods and the other Generals are really not interested in teenagers. They want people who will stay with them once they invest in training and all the rest. Teenagers tend to switch from job to job, since they are, not surprisingly, going through a period of exploration and testing.

But small business is another matter. We found in New York that Mike's TV Repair or Ed's Bike Shop or Sam's Auto Body was willing to take in a youth on a wage-subsidized basis, and that well over half the young people were kept on when the period of subsidy ran out. Indeed, these were especially problematic young people since they were mainly youth who had been labelled as delinquents or status offenders. But this program is showing great promise and deserves replication.

Some say we should lower the minimum wage for young people and that will create jobs for them. It might, in fact, but the question is, at whose expense? Most economists believe there would be a significant substitution effect injurious to older workers in such a policy, and so I think we should be very cautious about such a step. I might say that I myself am dubious in any case about measures that would diminish the protection of hard-won labor standards.

Second, we need to look with renewed care at the educational needs of the youth clientele. Those needs vary tremendously. Some youth are high school graduates with reasonable skills but lack the self-confidence and labor market "savvy" to undergo a successful interview or apprenticeship-type test. Such youth have been served well by programs which need now to be expanded more and coupled with legal and other efforts to insure that the entry level is not the end of the road.

Others, far too many, have dropped out or been pushed out and are reading and doing math at the third or fourth grade level. For these youngsters we have not found the answer. For one thing we must be willing to invest two or three years of training and skill development in these youth. There is no magic, short-term way to erase 12 years of educational destruction. It takes time.

But then we will have to face the question of who takes the responsibility for this training. The schools? Actually, the answer may be yes, but not in the same classrooms and with the same educational methods that did not work before. I believe there is an enormous challenge to our teachers as professionals and our schools as institutions to devise alternative methods and approaches that will reach the 17-year-old dropout. I also think, though, that we should challenge a broad array of educational entities -- community colleges, vocational schools, even proprietary schools, to see if they can do the job.

Third, we need to recognize that many of those who are further behind will need job readiness preparation besides their skills and extensive supportive service while they are on a job, whether that job is subsidized or not.

This, in fact, is a point where social workers come in particularly. These are social work skills, regardless of what agency is taking the programmatic responsibility. Moreover, many of you work for agencies which are ideally suited to be involved in running youth employment programs. Let us assume you work for a settlement house or a multi-service center. Your agency would be the perfect umbrella. Job developers whom you hire would find the jobs, whether in public, non-profit, or private enterprise settings.

Educational liaison people would arrange and stay with the operation of the educational component, whether it is run by the public schools, an alternative educational entity, or someone else. Social workers from your agency would stay with the young people through the process. Many of you may be involved on such an effort already. It is a model which makes great sense.

An issue which arises with greater frequency these days when youth employment is discussed is national youth service. It is an idea to which I, for one, am greatly attracted. It would be wonderful to rekindle the spark of youthful enthusiasm in service of one's country that was ignited, however briefly, in the 1960's. It would be even better if it could be done in such a way that volunteers could work side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, with people of different backgrounds, whether racial, ethnic or economic.

But it is costly. And the dilemma with which we have been saddled by those who are just now more concerned with the costs than the benefits of governmentally-financed services is that we must make harder choices than ever. I find myself in agreement with the New York Times editorial of last week, which concluded that "(n)ow is not the time to divert to already privileged youth even one dollar of the dwindling funds earmarked for their underprivileged peers." I wouldn't have put it quite that way, and it pains me greatly to say it, but I must say, I agree with the Times.

Nonetheless, we should continue to pursue the idea. Indeed, if the military draft is going to be restored -- an idea which I strongly oppose-- we should insist on national youth service as an alternative. As the economy recovers and the Proposition 13 mania recedes, both of which will happen, it should be possible to talk about adequate training and work experience opportunities for poor youth and volunteer opportunities for others more well off. Then the challenge will be to see that the two are not segregated one from the other, but that insofar as some of the work experience for the poor is in community service, it is, in effect, a fully compensated and totally integrated version of that which the well off are asked to do as a sacrifice.

If employment is the greatest crisis, there certainly are dozens of other problems worthy of serious discussion.

One is the role of services in relation to the schools. There are, to be sure, pressing educational issues ranging from how to produce high school graduates who can read and write to how to combine classroom and experiental learning in ways that will engage the attention of secondary students more effectively. What I think is of special pertinence to this audience and to the conference agenda is the issue of the school as an entry point or a referral point for services.

When I was in New York State, I held a series of regional meetings to get local professional and citizen perspectives on youth service needs. Among others I invited school people to those sessions, and I heard over and over the statement that they literally did not know where to get help in their

community for a child with behavior problems or family problems. On many of these occasions they were, as they spoke, in the same room with the exact people who could help in such a case, whom they had never met.

What does this tell us? For one thing we need to document what kinds of ancillary service needs children in school have which get in the way of their schoolwork, and how to meet them. One option is to co-locate services in the school, which might also be an option for services to deal with problems not necessarily associated with school performance. Particularly as school populations continue to dwindle, schools could be appropriate sites for community health care, family counseling, legal service and many other things.

The key question, and the possible trap, is control. I think it is extremely important, for reasons of accountability and, I must say, history, that non-educational services be delivered by people who work for agencies other than the school system. Look at vocational counselors, for example. In schools all over the country at this very moment, vocational counselors are telling certain students who are doing poorly in mathematics that they ought to go to the vocational high school and take carpentry. The only problem is, you cannot take the carpentry apprenticeship exam without taking three years of high school mathematics. I am overstating the case, obviously, but you see the point. If labor market information were provided in the school by people with up-to-date working knowledge of the labor market, literally thousands of high school students would be immediately better off, in terms of knowing what to study and how to go about pursuing a job.

So I say, let us use the school as an opportunity but let us proceed with caution.

Another important area for discussion and examination is our system of income maintenance. Our welfare system is especially anti-youth. To begin with, as we said, there are no jobs. Then there is no federally assisted program of welfare assistance to jobless single individuals or childless couples.

So it is as though every inner-city in America sported huge neon signs directed at its teenage young women: "There is one way to achieve a stable income without breaking the law. Have a baby." One out of five babies in America are born to teenage mothers. One out of three black babies is born to a teenage mother. This is no accident. It is the consequence of a joblessness/welfarist policy which says not only that teenage pregnancy is acceptable but that it is the only acceptable way to get your own apartment, your own furniture, and your own stable income.

If we are not going to have jobs, at least there should be income which is not conditioned on having a baby. I visited Australia last fall and found that, as a consequence of rising youth unemployment there, a considerable political attack was being mounted on teenagers as being shiftless

and lazy surfers and sun-worshipers. I didn't understand it until someone finally told me that everyone in Australia is eligible for cash assistance from age 16 on if they don't have a job. When I told them that we in America provide neither a job nor cash help, except where there is a baby, they were astonished.

If we had a policy which not only dealt meaningfully with the job gap but provided income assistance to individuals, childless couples, and intact families with children, starting with age 18, or earlier if emancipation could be proven, we might actually have something that could be called a family policy. Consider how many families in poverty areas never form at all because the father of the child has no job and no prospect of a job. If we rewarded family formation or at least didn't get in its way, we might actually begin to break the cycle of welfare dependency instead of continuing to blame its recipients for the situation in which we have placed them.

One cannot discuss a national social service strategy for youth without discussing juvenile justice.

First, delinquents. We have reaped what we sowed. Any system which all too often held truants for a longer time than robbers is rightly subject to derision, particularly when juvenile crime rates begin to rise sharply, as they did from 1960 to 1975.

Now, of course, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, to the point where Time magazine sets the tone and little old ladies are terrified every time they see a black teenager walk down the street. And let me say, how do you think it feels to be a black teenager when that happens?

The problem is certainly serious but it has been magnified even further. We read over and over that half the serious crime in America is committed by youth under 18. These are FBI figures and they include car thefts -- no laughing matter but hardly violent crime. In New York State, which is the media capital of the juvenile crime wave, the number of juvenile homicide arrests annually is around 40, that's right, 40, or less than three percent of all arrests for homicide. And that number has been dropping steadily for the last three or four years. In fact, nearly all trends in violent juvenile crime have been downward all over the country since 1975. But if each of those juvenile arrests for murder in New York State is headlined in the Daily News, as many of them are, particularly during election years, that's a story almost every week. The public will be duly terrified.

We need to remind ourselves of two things. Very few juvenile delinquents need to be kept under lock and key in order to protect the community. But some do.

Juvenile "sentencing" policies should be re-examined. The idea that no one is responsible in the eyes of the law for his or her crimes until some magic age is outmoded both developmentally and legally. We need

a set of sanctions which is graded in severity by both age and the seriousness and repeatedness of the crime involved. No 15-year-old should be punished as much as a 25-year-old for the same crime because that 15-year-old is still a 15-year-old. He or she has far greater capacity for change and development and should not be held responsible to the same degree. But the 15-year-old robber should be subject to a greater sanction than the 15-year-old shoplifter in terms of both time and the level of security of the institution in which he or she may be placed.

I would preserve the juvenile court as the entity to try these matters. I count myself as a tough critic of the juvenile courts in this country, but I think the adult court is an even worse idea for young people. Young people do present special developmental problems which require special understanding even as the community deserves more protection than it has had. And if we begin to use adult courts, we will shortly be tempted to use adult prisons for some children, an idea so abhorrent that I hope I need not refute it in any detail. Indeed, one of the things that worries me most about "Scared Straight" is the thought that someone will say that if the prison is a useful vehicle to terrify a youth for two hours, it is a useful place to terrify him for a week, and that if it is useful to threaten homosexual rape to make the point, it is useful to give the young people a little direct experience of it. If you think I am reaching, I refer you to Judge Femia of Prince Georges County, Maryland, outside Washington, who is regularly sending youth even now to adult lock-ups so they can get a "little taste" of what it is all about.

What about status offenders? I have come to the conclusion that the status-offense jurisdiction ought to be abolished. I think it is too broad and too vague, and therefore too easily abused. It strikes me as extremely odd, for example, that in New York State on any given day there are some 3000 PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) youngsters under residental care and only about half that number of delinquents. To the extent that some of those PINS youngsters were suspected of crimes that could not be proved, the lawyer in me says the crime should have been proved beyond a reasonable doubt or they should not have had their liberty taken away. To the extent that some are really in care by virtue of the fact that their families victimized them, the charge and the proof should have been abuse or neglect and not a label which stigmatizes the child.

I need to say (and this will differentiate me from other critics of the status jurisdiction) that there are some status offenders who are very sick kids. These are youngsters who are engaged in a systematic path of self-destruction, selling their own bodies, abusing drugs or alcohol, and/or running away from the merest hint of assertion of adult authority. These are youngsters who are far more complex than merely going through an aggravated form of adolescent rebellion, and too many of the reformers do not acknowledge this. The problem is that we really have no clinical or legal rhetoric that appropriately describes this smaller group of perhaps ten percent of those who now receive the status offense label. A critical issue

for the future is developing an etiology and a treatment response -- and here I do use the word "treatment" -- that fits these youngsters and provides an appropriate approach to them.

The further issue which is raised by the status offender question is the broader matter of services to troubled youth at the community level. If the small but highly successful HEW runaway program were greatly expanded, more runaway youth would find their way to services voluntarily and the need for judicial intervention would be correspondingly decreased. If there were more systematic programs available to reach chronically truant youth and work with them as a transition back to more conventional classrooms or to organized alternative education, there would, again, be that much less need for judicial intervention.

New York has what I think is an excellent system of youth bureaus at the county and municipal level which are funded for half their cost by the state, and which in turn contract with nonprofit community organizations to deliver needed services to young people who need special help of one kind or another. These state funds also support recreational programs which are designed for the youth population generally.

I believe the New York youth service model deserves study and examination by people from other jurisdictions who want to develop specialized services for young people at the community level. I also think the time is more than ripe for a national program along these lines.

The services I have been discussing are preventive in nature, but we also need to devote far more attention than we have to the residential facilities to which children are sent even as we try to reduce the number who are inappropriately placed in such facilities. There are two general issues here -- the mix or pattern of service, in that I think much more can be done with specialized group homes and family foster care than has been done, and the quality of institutional facilities which remain. As I indicated earlier, there still tends to be a "treatment" bias to such facilities, and the need is to pay close attention to the educational, vocational, and health needs of the residents as well.

Moreover, and rather ironically, if there are too many youngsters in what we might call general institutions, there are really very few models of intensive services in residential settings. Much has been written about the need for new approaches to the violent offender, but the retarded offender is an equally serious problem that is only now receiving some recognition. The New York State Division for Youth has perhaps 100 or more youngsters with IQ's of 70 or below, even discounting for cultural bias in testing. These youngsters really do not respond to programs premised on group norms. We undertook a small individualized learning center composed of two ten-bed units for these youngsters. It was based on a psychoeducateur model, and it did seem to have some promise. More such initiatives are needed.

There are many other critical issues in the area of juvenile justice which need attention and discussion, including the role of the juvenile court, the adequacy of legal representation, the performance and future of probation, and the very significant problem of the temporary detention facilities in which juveniles are held pending adjudication and disposition. In New York nearly 10,000 youth stay at least overnight in such facilities every year, so the issues surrounding detention are hardly insignificant.

I cannot leave the juvenile justice panoply of issues without mentioning federal foster care policy, which is in general a very negative influence. Federal foster care reimbursement rewards institutionalization and discourages prevention. A judge can only be sure that money will follow a child if he or she orders the child removed from home. There is no comparable reimbursement program for prevention services. Moreover, only nonprofit group care is reimbursable; public facilities are evidently presumed to be inferior. Institutions are rewarded at the same ratio as group homes and family foster care. In short, if a system were designed to be perverse, it could not be more perfect than the current stage of federal foster care policy. These comments, it should be said, are applicable to the entire child welfare system, not just foster care in the juvenile justice context.

There is something you can do about this. Last year there was a bill called HR 7200 which many of you know about. This year it is HR 3434, and it has just been reported to the floor by the House Ways and Means Committee. It increases the federal contribution to prevention, mandates periodic foster care case reviews, and creates a federal adoption subsidy. It would help. You should take active steps to support it.

I could keep you here all day, but I won't. The hour is getting late, you may have some questions for me, and I have assaulted you with a great deal of information and opinion already. We could go on and talk about where United Way fits into all of this. We could talk about the proper role for states vs. counties vs. cities vs. the private sector. We could examine the potential of specialized multi-service centers for youth like The Door in New York City. But we won't.

If, as I said at the outset, youth has become an elongated and painful period of enforced waiting for too many in America, the problem is intensified by the enormous gaps in available services which characterize the same age span. I saw time after time when I was in New York that the older our clients became, the fewer options there were available to get help to them. We might find a group home or foster care for a 16-year-old, but an appropriate temporary residential setting for a 19-year-old was practically out of the question.

The one hope we have is that we know far more about what we are not doing right or at all than we ever did before. And, Proposition 13 notwithstanding, I believe this knowledge creates new opportunities for action if we are willing to assume an advocacy role and press for appropriate change.

Lincoln said, "(A)s the times are new, so we must act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves." The times are new. The old solutions and the old dogmas do not have the same degree of validity we once thought. We must act accordingly. I think we can.